

Under Bill Johnson's Leadership

Post Celebrates Eight Years Of Stable Growth

With roots 105 years deep in the local black community. The Charlotte Post is currently celebrating eight years of stable growth and progressive change under the leadership of editor and publisher Bill Johnson.

The origins of The Post can be traced to The Messenger, a small church newspaper that was first published in 1877. Today, after more than a century of service to the black community in Charlotte, The Post has evolved into an independent weekly paper that attempts to give voice to the vital issues and concerns of black men and women.

Johnson purchased The Post in 1974 and set out to pursue his vision of maintaining "the special relationship of black readers to black newspapers...a relationship built on trust, strong loyalties, and the bond of believability."

Since Johnson took control, The Post has registered a 37 percent increase in revenues; circulation has also increased—by nearly 3,000 in the last two years alone as a result of Johnson's innovative "Churchwoman of the Year" campaign.

Once written and produced with help from outside sources, Post's staff size and capabilities have grown considerably during the eight years Johnson has edited and published the paper: Writing, advertising, layout, and circulation are all now handled by the 20-member staff.

Johnson feels that The Post has improved its "ability to serve the community" in recent years. "Our growth pattern has proven that we have the right format," he added. "We need only to expand that format."

The philosophy and editorial stance of the paper have changed under Johnson's direction as well. "We've concentrated more on issues that are important to black progress. The fact that we've developed an experienced, competent staff has given me more flexibility to deal with those issues," Johnson explained.

"The Churchwoman of the Year" campaign, initiated by Johnson in 1981, allies churches, businesses, and The Post in a cooperative effort aimed at strengthening the independent role of blacks in Charlotte. "We need to prove to the people of Charlotte that black people can produce," Johnson declared in inaugurating the campaign.

The recently concluded 1982 Churchwoman of the Year contest produced over \$3,700 for local churches and 767 new subscribers for The Post. These results were achieved in an eight week period and indicate, Johnson said, "what can be accomplished when black churches, businesses and newspapers work together. This kind of 'teamwork' is vital to the whole community," he maintained.

"The Churchwoman of the Year" contest is an extension of the church-oriented concept The Post began emphasizing in 1975: "That concept has proven our strong point," Johnson commented.



Post publisher Bill Johnson presents trophy to long-time advertiser Sam Johnson of Sam Johnson Lincoln-Mercury while guest speaker Dr. H. S. Diggs (left to right), key person Debra Williams and

Robert "Bob" Davis look on. Johnson was one of 10 advertisers honored by The Post at its Churchwoman of the Year Banquet at McDonald's Cafeteria



POST BANQUET SPEAKER DR. H.S. DIGGS

...Shown with Bob Davis And Bill Johnson



CHURCHWOMAN OF THE YEAR CONTESTANTS

...Pose with Sheila Connor and Anna Hood

An independent black-owned newspaper such as The Post, created in an environment of racial prejudice and economic de-privation, has, out of necessity, had to advance on a hazardous

road "less-traveled." After The Messenger was transformed into a general black-oriented weekly publication in 1918 and renamed The Charlotte Post that journey was begun by A. M. Houston, a civic leader and commercial printer who guided The Post for many years. Later, Dr. Nathaniel Tross, a noted black minister, purchased the paper and managed it until his death in 1971. The Tross family sold The Post to Garland Atkins and the General Publishing Company of Belmont, N.C.; in 1974, Johnson, who had been hired as managing editor by Atkins, bought The Post—thus fulfilling his desire to be free to make The Post a "mirror" of the concerns of black people in Charlotte.

Despite the enormous economic pressures involved in operating an independently owned newspaper, The Post has survived where many others have failed because, perhaps, of its singular mission to serve as the "voice" of the black community." Rev. H.S. Diggs succinctly summed up the importance of this mission when he advised the audience at the Post's anniversary banquet to "by all means, read the daily papers. But if you want to know what black people are doing—read The Charlotte Post."

Each week The Post tells the story of what "black people in Charlotte are doing"—in business, politics, entertainment, the arts—and tells the story, too, of individuals who are doing positive things in the community. Johnson's determination to use The Post to fight negative stereotyping of blacks has made the paper an affirmative "voice"—a voice that speaks to blacks in the language of pride and hope.

The future growth of The Post is dependent, Johnson says, on "whether or not we find ways to more quickly develop a vehicle to get our share of advertising dollars." Johnson added, "It's about time businesses were made aware of our influence in the community."

Reflecting on his eight years of ownership, Johnson credits the "community" for the gains The Charlotte Post has made: "You cannot praise this community enough for the strong support it has given The Post over the past eight years. Without this support we could not have achieved the position we now have," he concluded.

Auditions Set

For New Singers

Auditions for the 160-voice Oratorio Singers of Charlotte and the 26-34 voice Chamber Chorus will be held Monday, August 30, and Tuesday, August 31 from 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. at Myers Park United Methodist Church, 1020 Providence Road.

Dr. Mary Nell Saunders of Charlotte is entering her third season as Music Director of the organization.

For information, call the Oratorio Office, 332-8151, weekday mornings.